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RESEARCH IN COHESIVE AND DISRUPTIVE TENDENCIES IN  
COALITION-TYPE GROUPS

Technical Report # 2

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE FRENCH CABINETS OF THE  
FIRST LEGISLATURE OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC<sup>1</sup>

by

Robert Holt

The coalition is one of the favorite devices employed by many Western European democracies to obtain a ruling majority in their parliamentary bodies. This is particularly true in the countries whose political institutions are dominated by the multi-party system, but even Great Britain has at several crucial periods during this century resorted to coalition government.

The major problem which all coalitions face is the maintenance of stability and unity. The very structure of the coalition decrees the lack of stability. Coalitions are, in effect, temporary alliances made up of several conflicting and competing parties. Therefore, although there may be general agreement among the coalescing groups on abstract goals and purposes, there is often little consensus on the solutions to many of the pressing problems that any government must face. The participants usually feel that a coalition is just an expedient set up to cope with immediate situations while the party is maneuvering to establish a more desirable political position. Relatively little loyalty and allegiance are owed the coalition in comparison with that demanded by the party. The absence of a more or less integrated structure of shared values and the relatively subservient position the goals of the coalition hold compared to the goals of the party means that two of the most effective factors which determine stability in other groups and organizations are absent or present only in a fetal state. This paper is an exploratory study of the French cabinets of the First Legislature of the Fourth Republic which attempts to isolate some of the factors that determine and affect stability in coalitions.

France is notorious for the instability of its political institutions. It has changed its form of government five times in just over one hundred years and the life of its republics have been marked by repetitive cabinet crises. The causes for this instability, both constitutional and governmental, are rooted deep in the social structure of France. We can agree with Goguel that "It is important...to understand that the dissensions which make the French political situation so confusing have their roots in specific historical and social

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1. The research for this report was done at the Office of the Dean of Students, University of Minnesota during the summer of 1952 under Contract N8 onr-66216 with the Office of Naval Research. The writer wishes to express his indebtedness to Drs. Ben Willerman and John G. Darley for their advice and counsel.

circumstances and are not simply the reflection of a sort of congenital incapacity to adopt reasonable and effective political conduct." But in this paper no attempt will be made to present a review of the reasons for unstable government in France. This would require a thorough study of French society, its cleavages and schisms, and of the social base of the various parties represented in the National Assembly. Such an effort would be tangential to the central problem of this paper. This paper, to the degree that it is focused on the French problem, is concerned with the stability of French cabinets qua coalitions, given the antagonistic groupings in the Assembly and the social matrix within which French political institutions operate.<sup>1</sup> During the period under consideration there were nine cabinets and two abortive attempts to form cabinets.<sup>2</sup> There were no elections and thus the composition of the National Assembly remained about constant. All of the cabinets were supported by approximately the same parties, consisted of about the same faces, and wrestled with similar problems. Yet one of these cabinets lasted over a year; another less than a day. This study is an attempt to account for the factors that made for relative stability in some and relative instability in others.

Most of the governments of the ~~First~~ Legislature of the Fourth Republic have been made up of those parties which have been called the "third-force"--that is, those parties of the center, which, although disagreeing on such basic questions as economic and religious policy, nevertheless realized that their failure to cooperate and govern France under the constitution of the Fourth Republic would result in the coming to power of either Charles deGaulle or the Communist Party. Either alternative would mean the end of the kind of democracy under which the parties of the center had existed. In order to understand the evolution of the third force governments, it is necessary to discuss briefly the major developments in French politics immediately following the war.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Anyone interested in the more basic problems of French political instability should look at Francois Goguel, Le Politique des Partis sous 3d Republique (Paris, 1946) and John E. Sawyer, "Strains in the Social Structure of Modern France," in Edward Meade Earl, Modern France (Princeton, 1951).

2. Under the French system a Premier-designate is chosen by the President. He must then be accepted by an absolute majority in the National Assembly. After thus invested, he chooses his cabinet which the Assembly must also approve by an absolute majority. The above mentioned two abortive attempts to form cabinets include those Premier-designates who were initially invested by the Assembly but who failed to form an acceptable cabinet. There were other Premier-designates who either failed to get the initial approval of the Assembly or who resigned without trying.

3. For a more complete review of the history of French politics in the post-war years see Francois Goguel, France under the Fourth Republic (Ithaca, 1952), and David Thompson, Democracy in France: The Third and Fourth Republics (New York, 1952). The review in this paper was adopted from the above works plus a reading of the New York Times and Le Monde (Paris) during the period under consideration.

### HISTORICAL REVIEW

The ruling power in France directly after the liberation and up until 1947 was held by a coalition of the three parties of the left. Paradoxically, however, the coalition was dominated by a man associated with the right. The war and the period of liberation had brought about a complete discrediting of the traditional right wing of French politics. In addition the Radicals, although few of their adherents went along with the Vichy government, suffered the stigma of being the party in power during the great defeat of 1940. The parties on the left, on the other hand, gained enormously in prestige during the liberation. The Communists, to be sure, had been the allies of Germany during the early years of the war and their party had been outlawed in 1939. But no group had a more valiant record during the liberation, and this plus their cooperation with deGaulle earned them the reputation of great patriots. In the elections of October, 1945, the Communist Party emerged as the largest in France. The Socialists also gained in prestige through the heroic work of their leaders in the underground and through the admirable attitude Blum maintained throughout the trial that Vichy brought against him. The MRP (Popular Republican Movement), a Christian-democratic party, was the third member of the tri-partite coalition of the left. Its strength was the most surprising. The Christian-democratic ideal and parties organized around that ideal had never been strong during the Third Republic. Catholics had always been suspect; to most loyal Frenchmen a good Catholic could not be a good democrat. But the courageously expressed political and social programs of the MRP and its record in the underground made it appealing to certain elements in the more liberal sectors of the electorate, and the discrediting and collapse of the traditional parties of the right liberated many voters who, having nowhere else to turn, followed the party most closely associated with the famous hero of the liberation, Charles deGaulle. DeGaulle, who formally became leader of the tri-partite coalition with the formation of his cabinets in November of 1945, resigned indignantly in January of 1946. Felix Gouin, a Socialist, succeeded him as premier in a new tri-partite cabinet, and the parties, frustrated after several months of deGaulle's stern leadership, returned with a vengeance to the kind of cabinet government they had known before the war.

It would be a mistake not to recognize the very basic differences that existed between the parties that made up the governing coalition. Although Catholic, Communist and Socialist felt a certain commonality of purpose resulting from their experiences in the underground, the basic doctrinal differences precluded any real and lasting cooperation, and the history of the tri-partite coalition was a history of steady disintegration. The first near permanent division occurred during the drafting of the first constitution which was not ratified. (The MRP objected to the Socialist-Communist version.) But, in spite of this break, the accepted version of the constitution was the product of three parties working together in a cabinet headed by George Bidault.

The ideal of tri-partitism suffered new assaults during the first electoral campaign under the newly adopted constitution. The Socialist-Communist co-ordinating committee formed on December 4, 1944, had been dissolved some months before and the Socialists' campaign literature became openly anti-communist. The MRP was even

more vociferously opposed to the Communists and let it be clearly understood that they meant to force the Communists into the opposition at the first opportune moment. But in spite of the ever widening schisms in the tri-partite bloc, Blum and the Socialists managed to act as a buffer between the MRP and the Communists and secured the backing of both groups for an all-socialist cabinet in December, 1946. But both the Communists and the MRP supported the cabinet with the clear understanding that they would do so only until the election of a president the following month.

With solid Communist and Socialist backing plus about forty other votes, Vincent Auriol, a Socialist, was elected president. The first cabinet during his presidency was headed by Ramadier, another Socialist, and although it was based on the tri-partite formula, tri-partitism was at this time all but officially dead. The Communists let it be known that they would not continue their cooperation unless they could have more influence over decisions, and the MRP was only waiting for an opportune moment in which to drive the Communists out of the majority. The major domestic issue that faced this cabinet was inflation control; the major foreign issue, Indo-China. The ideas of the Communists on both these issues, but particularly the latter, differed radically from the other groups in the government. In April, 1947, a strike broke out in the Regie National Renault in support of a demand for a wage increase. Although the Communist Party originally opposed the strike (supporting the official government stand), it soon realized that the strike represented sincere and powerful grass root sentiment and threw its powerful apparatus behind the workers' demands. The ensuing conflict between the Communist ministers and the rest of the cabinet forced Ramadier to put the government's position on a wage freeze before the Assembly as a matter of confidence. The motion was carried by a comfortable majority, but the Communists voted against it. The next day Ramadier asked for the resignation of all who had voted against the government. Tri-partitism was officially dead.<sup>4</sup>

Charles deGaulle, never a man to miss the dramatic moment, chose this hectic Spring to re-enter political life. His solution to the political problems of France was well-known, at the time on the basis of a speech that he had made just before the ratification of the constitution. At that time he campaigned for a constitution in which the executive was given the predominant power. He stated categorically that the "executive power should not emanate from parliament." During April of 1947 deGaulle gave a series of speeches in which he called for a "Reassemblent du Peuple Francais." The RPF was not to be a political party in the traditional sense, but was established to free France from rule by political parties. The French are particularly prone to examine contemporary politics in light of history, and to many deGaulle seemed to represent a sort of latter day Bonapartism. To the convinced Democrat, the RPF was reminiscent of the anti-democratic leagues that had plagued the life of the Third Republic, particularly at the time of the Dreyfus affair and again during the 'thirties.

Thus at the very time that the government was forced to look to the right for support, the right was being wooed by a figure determined to change the constitution. DeGaulle did not conceive of the RPF as a political party in the strict sense of that word. He wanted to found

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<sup>4</sup>. Although the break came officially over a matter of domestic policy, differences over Indo-China were perhaps a more basic cause. See Goguel, Franco under the Fourth Republic, p. 25.



an organization that would be above parties and which would be swept into power by the overwhelming unified support of the French people. He felt that it would be possible for men to belong both to a regular political party and to the RPF and had hoped to draw support from all parties but the Communist. The only requirement he had for his adherents in the Assembly was that they remain in the opposition so as to hasten the final collapse of unstable coalition government.

The Socialist could not but look suspiciously at the new movement. DeGaulle's political ideas involved too much of the element of the strong personal leader which the left has always considered the most serious threat to the Republic. Also, at the time in which the Socialists were breaking with the Communists they could hardly show any acceptance of a man like deGaulle without being considered "traitors of the people" and perhaps losing much of their working class support. The ideal of working class unity was still strong in the Socialist Party, and at the time of the forced resignation of Communist ministers from a Socialist cabinet the major question debated among the Socialists was whether or not they too should move into the opposition.

The MRP also showed an unfavorable reaction to deGaulle's return to the political arena, but its decision was more difficult. Many of the important figures in the MRP had become personally attached to deGaulle during the liberation. But the MRP had been founded in order to provide a party firm in its republican loyalty which Catholic voters could support: a party dedicated to social reforms and yet not possessing the dogmatic anti-clericalism of all other French parties of the left or left center. In this period of political upheavals, the MRP felt that it had to maintain a common front with the Socialists if it was to remain faithful to the ideal on which the party was built.

The voters on the right were to become as enthusiastic about the RPF as the left was antagonistic. The aura of treason to the Republic which hung over the conservatives after Vichy could be destroyed if they were led by the great hero of the liberation. Many basically conservative Frenchmen who had supported the MRP for lack of another place to turn felt more at home in the RPF. But in May this appeal of the RPF was not apparent, and when the chance to force the Communists out of the government presented itself, the right would not weaken the position of the government--even a Socialist government--which would undertake that step.

While Socialists were still debating whether or not to move into the opposition, Ramadier asked the National Congress of his party if he could remain in power. The conservative wing of the party carried the vote 2,529 to 2,125 and Ramadier remained as premier. But the Socialists and the MRP at this time did not have a majority in the Assembly, and thus had to look to the right for support. At first this was obtained almost without concessions, for no party on the right wanted to force the collapse of the government and bring about a situation in which the Socialists might come back into power with Communist support. But as the schism between the Socialists and the Communists became greater and the Radicals and others devoted to an essentially liberal economic policy became less able to stomach

Socialist economic measures, the government majority began to decline. This majority which was 360 in May fell to 331 on July 4 and to 292 on September 5.

As the municipal elections drew near in the fall of 1947, the relations between the parties making up the majority became increasingly strained. The Socialist militants, who had just become a majority within the party, were becoming alarmed at the concessions Ramadier was having to make to the right in order to maintain his majority. The MRP was beginning to fear the possible loss of voters to deGaulle in the coming elections, and the Radicals and Moderates were feeling more confident and making more adamant demands. The results of the election supported the worst fears of the MRP. The RPF, which in most of the larger municipalities offered lists jointly with the Moderates and Radicals, scored a smashing victory largely at the expense of the MRP. In the larger cities the Christian-democrats lost almost three-quarters of the votes they had won in 1946. The Communists' losses were limited but they did lose a number of mayoralties because of the coalitions formed against them. The Socialists held their ground and even picked up a few city councils. The Radicals and Moderates with deGaulle's blessing had again become a political force to be reckoned with.

Although these elections did not affect the composition of the Assembly, they did raise the question of whether or not a government which represented only a minority of the electorate could long endure.<sup>5</sup> But the anticipated change in government came about in a way no one had predicted. The elections proved to the Socialists and Popular Republicans that the Republic was threatened from both the left and the right and that what was needed was a "Third Force" to defend French democracy. When the Socialists decided to open negotiations with the Popular Republicans and those Radicals who "remained loyal to the republic" in order to form a "union of true democrats," Ramadier himself initiated talks with all political groups except the Communists and the Gaullists in order to help develop the basis for a workable majority to choose a successor for his now doomed cabinet. As the negotiations dragged on, Guy Mollet, newly elected Secretary-General of the Socialist Party representing its liberal wing, became impatient. In an attempt to speed things up, he announced in a speech before an Anglo-American press club that the ministerial crisis (that had not yet begun) would be solved within forty-eight hours as Leon Blum was willing to become Premier. In effect Mollet was announcing the resignation of the Premier, for Ramadier could not retain his already tenuous seat in the face of Mollet's statement. On November 20 Blum was designated Premier by the President and the next day he appeared before

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5. Although deGaulle did not have any elected representatives in the National Assembly during the First Legislature, he organized an "intergroup" in the Assembly to which most of the Moderates and some of the Radicals and Popular Republicans (who were later expelled from the MRP) belonged. The relatively lax discipline that characterizes the French parties of the right enabled the participants in the "intergroup" to owe a dual allegiance. After the new upper chamber was elected in 1948, the organization of the intergroup was changed somewhat and more was demanded of its members.



the Assembly in order to seek its acceptance.

Outbreaks with an insurrectionary flavor were creating disturbances all over France as Blum in his speech tried for the first time to rally the center parties into a third force to save the Republic from its enemies on the left and right. "There is a double danger," he told the Assembly. "On the one hand, international communism has openly declared war on French democracy. On the other hand, there has been formed in France a party whose goal--and perhaps whose only goal--is to deprive the national sovereignty of its fundamental rights."

The Assembly failed by nine votes to give Blum the necessary absolute majority to invest him as Premier. Blum himself said later that this vote showed that the third force either did not exist in the Assembly or that it was not "capable of becoming conscious of itself, of acting, and of governing." With Blum's defeat only two alternatives were open to the Assembly. Either the parties that had supported Ramadier could again get together and establish a basis for agreement or the Assembly could dissolve itself and hold new elections. The latter alternative was the one demanded by deGaulle, but there was little likelihood that the representatives of the parties that had suffered in the recent municipal elections would turn their fate over to the people at this time. The big danger in new elections was not that either deGaulle or the Communists would win clear cut majorities, but that between them they would command a majority and make it impossible for government to be formed within the constitutional framework.

Robert Schuman was next called upon by the President to form a government. Blum had been defeated for two main reasons. First, by equating the Gaullist menace with the Communist menace, he alienated some deputies who, although they did not see eye to eye with deGaulle's politics, nevertheless respected him as a patriot. Secondly, the Radicals and Moderates were beginning to become more aware of their increased power and many were not willing to commit themselves to a government that would be pervaded by Socialist economic principles. Schuman was acceptable to those who had voted against Blum and at the same time was able to hold Socialist support. In his appearance before the Assembly, he asked simply for the support of those who were loyal to the Republic and was invested with only the Communists voting against him. When he presented his cabinet and program he lost some of his right wing support but was nevertheless able to command a majority. It was not a majority as unified either in what it proposed or what it opposed as that called for by Blum, but it was essentially a third force coalition dedicated to tackling French problems within the constitutional framework of the Fourth Republic. The coalition, composed of the Socialists, MRP, most Radicals and some Moderates, was racked with internal frictions, hostilities, and dogmatic incompatibilities, but in one form or another it was revived after each ministerial crisis and managed by compromise, chicanery and a fierce loyalty to the Republic to govern France during the rest of the period of the first legislature.

The Schuman government was in power during one of the most crucial and dangerous periods in post-war French history. It managed successfully to put down the insurrectionary strikes without alienating the entire working class, and its policy contributed to the

successful splitting of the Communist controlled CGT and the formation of the Socialist union, the Force Ouvriere. But in the spring of 1948 it ran a snag on the question of church-state relations. Some of the coal mining companies which had been nationalized in 1946 owned Catholic schools, and the question arose as to what would happen to those schools when the nationalization went into effect. The two largest parties in the government split over the issue. The MRP advocated a continuation of their parochial status whenever the parents of the pupils desired it whereas the Socialists wanted them converted into public schools. All attempts at compromise between the parties of the government failed, but the government did not fall because the Communists, Socialists and Radicals (the old Popular Front coalition) joined forces temporarily to put through a secularization law. But the Christian-democrats were somewhat embittered by the fact that members of a coalition of which they were leaders had sought the support of the opposition in order to put through a bill that they violently opposed. This friction contributed to the reservoir of discontent. The government finally fell in July when the Socialists withdrew their support after failing to get a twelve billion franc reduction in military expenditures. The split had actually been brewing for a long time and came as "a culmination of the long standing friction between the Socialists and the MRP over religious education, and between the Socialists and Radicals over a managed vs. a liberal economy."

The tenuous nature of the third force coalition became strikingly obvious in the next few months. Andre Marie, a Radical, succeeded Schuman as premier, securing even broader support than Schuman had. The dominant figure in this cabinet was Paul Reynaud, the Moderate financial expert. As could be expected, his plans for stabilizing the economy were not acceptable to the Socialists, and after just a month the government collapsed producing one of the most severe crises in the period under consideration. The MRP felt that since the Socialists had caused the downfall of the last two cabinets, they should assume the responsibility of heading the new government. But when talks between the President and the party leaders revealed the Radicals would not support a cabinet headed by a Socialist, Robert Schuman agreed to attempt to establish a new government. Schuman was invested by a comfortable majority, but when he began to pick his cabinet the Socialists announced that they would refuse to support him unless he agreed to certain wage increases. At first Schuman refused and tried to form a government without Socialist participation, but when it became obvious that this was impossible, he yielded partially to Socialist demands. But the compromise with the Socialists alienated some of his right wing support and his government was defeated the afternoon of the day it was accepted. In addition to about fifteen Radicals who deserted Schuman after voting for him earlier in the day, the small center UDSR party, headed by Plevon, contributed to Schuman's fall.

The government that finally managed to solve this long ministerial crisis lasted longer than any during the first legislature; in fact, only sixteen governments since 1871 had lasted as long. There are many reasons why the Queuille government managed to stay in existence for over a year when other governments supported by the same majority lasted less than a day. Shortly after Queuille came into power in the middle of October, 1948, the Assembly recessed leaving the cabinet

free to rule almost by decree. When compromises did not have to be paraded in front of the Assembly for approval, ministers seemed more flexible and less dogmatic. Certain measures taken to put down the very dangerous Communist inspired coal strike would perhaps have caused the collapse of the government if they had needed Assembly approval. A second reason why the government survived the first few difficult months was that the parties had agreed to a political truce while the General Assembly of the United Nations was meeting in Paris. Thirdly, it was felt that the elections that were to be held in November would indicate if there was any possibility of a more stable political alignment and it would be beneficial to all concerned to support the present government until the results of the election were known. After the elections the coalition had another good reason to stick together. In these indirect elections for members of the upper chamber, deGaulle scored a smashing and surprising victory. The RPF received almost 41% of the total vote to become the largest party in France. The center parties knew that the last cabinet crisis had almost precipitated a general election and that the next one might. No one of the parties wanted to face their electorates after deGaulle's show of strength. The Socialists, who were the direct cause of most of the crises of third force cabinets, were particularly unwilling to face their rank and file in an election as they had just supported an economy program which was unpopular among working people.

Throughout the winter of 1948-1949, Queuille succeeded by threats of resignation in forcing legislation through the Assembly that was opposed by one or another party in the government. But this tactic was not used much after the local elections held in March (elections roughly equivalent to our state legislature elections) in which a majority was returned for the center coalition. DeGaulle lost some of the strength that he had shown the previous November. The government was probably saved from the increasing confidence of the participating parties following this election first by the month-long Easter recess of the Assembly, and, secondly, because of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris. This meeting, with the German question the top item of business, was so important to the French that they felt that they could not weaken their already not too strong bargaining position by a ministerial crisis. During this period, some attacks on the cabinet, particularly those by Reynaud over a proposed tax bill, would normally have caused its collapse.

The Queuille government survived the centrifugal forces that threatened it through the early summer of 1950 and was granted a respite in July when the Assembly voted to recess from July 31 to October 18. But in November the Socialists were coming under pressure from their rank and file to push for a wage increase that was probably justified because of the cost of living increases. Queuille refused to yield to these demands and resigned on November 18.<sup>6</sup>

The crisis that followed was as long and as difficult as had been predicted and political prognosticators again began talking about a

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6. The effects of American aid and the party's realization that no other majority was possible probably also contributed to the longevity of the Queuille ministry.

general election. Two men, Jules Moch, a Socialist, and Rene Mayor, a Radical, were unable to form acceptable cabinets after being invested by the Assembly. Finally Bidault compromised the wage question by proposing to drop government controls over wages while re-introducing collective bargaining and was able to obtain the cooperation of enough parties to form a government. But it took many days of negotiations before the agreement was worked out, and Bidault went so far as to get tacit approval of his cabinet before even presenting himself to the Assembly to be invested. This ministry, however, was never very strong. In January, just a few months after it was established, the Socialists withdrew their ministers and abstained from voting, allowing the cabinet to remain in power as a minority government. In order to get controversial legislation through the Assembly during this period, Bidault often found it necessary to present measures as a matter of confidence. The Soviet Union's recognition of Vietnam in Indo-China during the spring also tended to unite the center parties behind a foreign policy and strengthened their desires not to have a cabinet crisis.

The Bidault government finally fell in June, 1950, when the Socialists ceased abstaining and voted against it over a difference in the computation of the increased pay rates for civil servants. Queuille then succeeded in forming a government excluding the Socialists, but it fell on the first ballot taken after the Assembly had approved it. By this time the Korean War had broken out and the old majority, realizing the need for a government in this period of international crisis, rallied behind a cabinet headed by Plevon. This government proposed the new electoral reforms as a part of its program. There were bitter differences over the form the bill should take, however, and when the government's proposals were turned down in February, 1951, Plevon resigned. Plevon was not well at the time and his wife was very ill. The fact that virtually the same bill was accepted a few months later indicates that perhaps these personal problems contributed to Plevon's decision to resign.

After Bidault and Mollet failed to get Assembly approval for their proposed cabinets, Queuille reconstituted a government similar to the one he had so successfully led eighteen months before. The government secured the passage of the electoral reform bill and the Assembly dissolved itself in June, five months before its term expired in order to prepare for the elections that were held in the summer.

#### SOME TENTATIVE GENERALIZATIONS

What do the experiences of the French Cabinets tell us about the stability of coalitions? Perhaps the most frequently observed characteristic of coalitions is that they are the children of crisis and that the participants' unity of action and purpose and the consequent stability of the coalition vary directly with the magnitude of the threat. Undoubtedly, the most significant factor that held the third force coalitions together was the omnipresent threat from both left and right. After deGaulle's return to the political arena as leader of the RPF, there was no "loyal opposition" to the government. All of the parties that made up the government of this period, although at times they sacrificed both principle and power by

participation in the government, realized that the espoused program of both of the major opposition parties involved the downfall of the Fourth Republic and most likely of the party system that the government represented. On the left there were the Communists whose program is well known; on the right the Gaullists preached a sort of latter day Bonapartism. Either of these alternatives meant the destruction of the parties in the coalition, and whenever an appeal was made for unity, this situation was vividly put before the members of the Assembly in a manner that did justice to the finest traditions of French oratory.

The constitutional framework in which the government operated made the opposition's threats a constant reality. Although the Assembly was elected for a five-year period, it could dissolve itself whenever it wished. Since this process of dissolution became much easier after two cabinets had fallen on a failure to receive a confidence vote, the premier who fell on a confidence vote was putting a whip into the hand of his successor by giving him the power to make general elections a likely alternative to voting confidence. This was the club that Bidault used to keep his minority government in power from January to June of 1950. If you combine the facts that any cabinet could at any time make general elections a possibility, that both Communists and Gaullists were using all the techniques at their disposal to bring about the dissolution of the Assembly and new elections, and that almost all of the parties felt that they would lose disastrously in an election, one can appreciate the imminence of disaster and the role it played in creating what unity there was.

The most stable government of the period lasted thirteen months. We believe that one of the reasons for this "stability" was the fact that the disaster inherent in a general election was dramatically presented to the center parties shortly after Quettille came into power. Under the French system elections for the upper chamber did not coincide with those for the Assembly. In November, 1948, those elections were held and deGaulle scored a stunning victory, receiving over forty per cent of the vote. Since the Communists emerged as the second strongest party, it was evident that if general elections were held at that time, it was very likely that no government could be formed within the constitutional framework of the Fourth Republic because no majority would exist without either Gaullist or Communist support. Both were intransigently dedicated to non-participation in any coalition. In short, a general election at that time probably would mean the end of the Fourth Republic. The center parties could interpret the elections in no other manner and compromised more readily in order to keep Quettille in power.

But there were factors other than the perception of a threat that affected the stability of the French cabinets. The coalitions studied were of such a nature that if one party withdrew the government would fall. Thus it seemed likely that a fruitful line of inquiry would be to examine the behavior of the parties that caused the collapse of the various ministries.

It seems reasonable to assume that all the participant parties in a coalition carry on a kind of political bookkeeping. There are



both advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a coalition and the parties probably are engaged in a more or less continual process of weighing one against the other. Perceived advantages and disadvantages may be measured on many different continua -- they may range from an estimation of potential alienation of voters to concerns for the Republic to the prestige that may accrue to an individual who gets a cabinet post. But generally speaking, if the advantages are greater than the disadvantages, the party will tend to support the coalition. What are some of the factors that are related to the perception of advantages and disadvantages?

Perceived Control -- The degree to which a participant party feels that it can control the policies of the coalition apparently is an important factor related to perceived advantages. The behavior of the parties in the cabinets studied brings this out in a negative way. Five of the nine cabinets collapsed because the Socialists withdrew their support (and the last cabinet resigned by mutual consent of the parties involved so that they could prepare for the elections). What are some of the reasons for the Socialist Party's action in this regard?

The political evolution of the National Assembly in the post war period was marked by a shift in power from left to right. The most dramatic moment in this evolution came when the Communists left the government, but it continued right up until the final vote in June of 1951. All through this period there was a continual erosion of the basic governmental policies established by the all Socialist Blum cabinet in 1946 to deal with the crucial problems of post-war rehabilitation and development. The Socialists' could not help but interpret this as a decline in their influence over the policies of the coalition and their support of the governments became more reticent and less dependable. This behavior indicates that perceived benefit varies directly with the influence a group can exert over the policies of the coalition.

Identification with the System -- Although there is a certain amount of competition and conflict among the members of a coalition, it is important to recognize that they are all members of the same institutional system. Labor coalitions are made up of labor unions, international coalitions of nation-states, governmental coalitions of political parties. There is evidence to indicate that one of the general purposes of a coalition is the promotion of this institutional framework of which the participants are a part. This was certainly true in the case of the French cabinets studied. There were numerous statements from leaders of all parties in the Third Force that the governmental coalition existed partially to preserve the Fourth Republic and thus the system of cabinet government on which the parties flourished.

But although all the participant parties are members of the same institutional framework, there are various degrees of identification with this framework. This is certainly not an unusual kind of phenomena. It can be easily recognized that some Boy Scout Troops identify more with the Boy Scout Movement than do others, that some labor  
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unions identify with the labor movement more than others, etc. But this degree of identification appears to have a unique significance among the members of a coalition. A hypothesis that emerges from this study is that a participant's perception of advantages from coalition membership will vary directly with its identification with the institutional system which the coalition is promoting.

The constitution of the Fourth Republic can be looked upon as a child of the left. The Communist, Socialist, and MRP tripartite coalition was in control of the assembly which drafted it and sent it to the people. It was a constitution that stripped the conservative Upper Chamber of most of its power, placed severe limits on executive power, but at the same made an attempt to provide by numerous parliamentary devices for more stable governments than were known in the Third Republic. The left, particularly the Socialists and Popular Republicans, had a kind of parental pride and identification with the newly founded republic. Furthermore, the Socialist Party was honored by having the first president and the first premier selected from among its ranks. This "pride of a founder" and identification with the Fourth Republic probably contributed to the Socialists remaining in the government at several crucial periods during the first year of the Republic. When the Communists left the government there were a significant number of Socialists who advised that the Socialist Party also withdraw from the government. But the appeal of working class unity was overcome partially by a sense of responsibility to and identification with the Republic that they had helped bring into being.

But as time went on the politics of the Fourth Republic became almost indistinguishable from the politics of the Third. The Socialist economic policies originated in 1946 needed a strong majority if they were to be implemented. In the absence of such a majority seemingly endless debates took place and in the absence of action a kind of "laissez faire" policy not unacceptable to the Radicals began to appear. The Socialists became disillusioned and eventually refused to participate in the government while the Radicals took heart and began to play the crucial role in the Fourth Republic that they had played in the Third. When the Socialists identified closely with the system they appeared more willing to compromise in order to preserve the coalition than they did when this identification disappeared. On the other hand, the Radicals who at first were somewhat suspicious of the creature the left had bequeathed to France, later saw that it was little different than the Third Republic and began to participate with vigor in the political life of France.

Other Considerations Related to Perceived Advantages -- The sections above indicated that the net advantages that a party feels accrues from participation in a coalition is a crucial consideration vis-a-vis the question of its withdrawing or remaining in a coalition. But before terminating this discussion of perceived advantages and disadvantages it should be pointed out that there is some reason to suppose that it is not only a party's estimated difference between these variables (that is, net perceived advantage) that is important to a party's behavior in a coalition. The actions of the Socialist Party suggest that the absolute magnitude of the variables may also be an important consideration. The Socialists realized that they,

more than the other parties, were losing votes every day they stayed in the government and were at least silent partners to the policies that were unpopular with their supporters. But the Fourth Republic itself might have been the price for remaining permanently in the opposition. Although there was clearly a net benefit derived from not causing the permanent collapse of the government, the consequences of any decision were so severe that the behavior of the Socialist Party was erratic and unpredictable. It would cause the downfall of one ministry only to support the next one that was practically identical. In the spring of 1950 they withdrew from the cabinet and abstained from all voting in order to try to absolve themselves from responsibility for the actions of the Bidault government without at the same time causing its collapse.

Factors not Directly Related to Perceived Advantages -- There are other factors which affect a party's behavior in a coalition that are not directly related to perceived advantages. One of these is the amount of unity and cohesiveness in the participant party itself. A general hypothesis about group behavior might be that a group's ability to deal effectively with outside situations varies directly with its unity or cohesiveness. Specifically in regard to coalitions this study indicates that one could fruitfully hypothesize that a party's ability to remain in and contribute to the stability of a coalition varies with its unity or cohesiveness.

Shortly after deGaulle's return to the political arena, he went to various members of the Assembly in whose districts he had won heavy returns and offered them support in the next election if they in turn would vote against the government and thus hasten its collapse. This caused some breaks in the ranks of the Radicals and Popular Republicans - breaks which hindered those parties' activities in the government. The split in the Socialist Party was perhaps as much as any other factor responsible for the collapse of the Ramadier Government in 1947.

The degree to which the lack of unity in a participating party will affect its membership in a coalition is modified by the discipline enforced. Although there were factions in the Socialist Party, discipline was rigorously enforced and the parliamentary members voted as a group. This enabled the Socialists to throw their entire bloc of vote either for or against the government although individual deputies disagreed with the party's decision. The discipline helped to mitigate the effect that the cleavages in the party would normally have had on the stability of the cabinet. On the other hand, although the Radicals were generally more unified on issues than the Socialists, they caused the collapse of some governments and prevented the formation of others because a few of their deputies refused to follow the leadership of the party and voted against the government.

No attempt has been made in this paper to attempt to account for all the factors which affect stability in coalitions. As the title states, it is an exploratory study. As an exploratory study we feel that it was relatively successful. Several areas for further research were suggested. The next step, of course, is to lay out in precise terms some of the hypotheses suggested above.

FRENCH GOVERNMENTS FROM JANUARY 1947 TO JUNE 1951

<u>CABINET</u>	<u>LENGTH OF LIFE</u>	<u>REASON OF FALL</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Remadier (Soc.) Soc., MRP, and CP participation	Ten months Jan. 23, 1947 to Nov. 19, 1947	The left wing of the Socialist Party came into power and, bitterly opposing Ramadier's concessions to the right, forced him to resign.	The Communists who originally participated in this cabinet were driven out in May and after that it was supported by the Radicals and some Moderates.
Blum (Soc.) attempt			
Schuman (MRP) MRP, Soc., Rad., and Mod. participation	Eight months Nov. 27, 1947 to July 19, 1948	Socialists demanded a reduction in defense expenditure they failed to get.	Came as a culmination of friction over religious and economic policy.
Marie (Rad.) Rad., Soc., MRP, and Mod. participation	One month July 28 to Aug. 28, 1948	Socialists refused to go along with Reynaud's economic plans.	
Schuman (MRP) MRP, Soc., Rad., and Mod. participation	One day Aug. 8, 1948	A few Radical deputies did not like the concession granted the Socialists. Plevon also withdrew his support.	Fell on the same day it was estab- lished. Social- ists would not join with wage increases granted; some Radicals could not go along with this.

<u>CABINET</u>	<u>LENGTH OF LIFE</u>	<u>REASON OF FALL</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Queuille (Rad.) Rad., Soc., MRP and Mod. participation	Thirteen months Aug. 15, 1948 to Oct. 5, 1949	Queuille resigned because he refused to meet Socialist demands for wage increases. Devalua- tion of the pound contributed to fall.	Longest cabinet of the period.
Moch (Soc.) invested			
Mayer (Rad.) invested			
Bidault (MRP) MRP, Soc., Rad., and Mod. participa- tion	Eight months Oct. 28, 1949 to June 25, 1950	Socialists withdrew in dispute over pay- ment of wage increase to civil servants.	Had picked cabinet at time of investiture vote. Existed as minority government with Socialists abstain- ing vote from Feb. until June.
Queuille (Rad.) MRP, Rad., Mod. participation	One day July 6, 1950	Lost essential right wing support and Socialist abstention.	
Pleven (UDR) UDR, MRP, Soc., Rad. and Mod. participa- tion	Seven months July 12, 1950 to Feb. 25, 1951	Pleven resigned after test vote on electoral law was defeated.	His wife was very ill and Pleven himself not feeling well when he resigned.
Bidault (MRP) attempt Mollet (Soc.) attempt			
Queuille (Rad.) Rad., Soc., MRP Mod. participa- tion.	Three months Mar. 11, 1951 June, 1951.	Cabinet resigned in order to have the new elections in June.	This government passed virtually the same electoral law that had been defeated in Feb.

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